

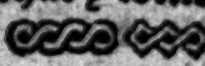
✠

Complaynt of the soule.

✠



BRITISH  
MUSEUM

Here begynneth a lamentable complaint that y<sup>e</sup> soule  
maketh of the wretched lyfe of the body. 



Edet aiaz mea bite mee. My soule is wes  
ry of the lyfe. For there I see no thyng but  
mater of sorowe myserye & synne. The parte  
of my lyfe passed is ful lamentable whā I re  
membze it / the present parte suppressed myn  
herte with heuynesse for it is vnreformed. And y<sup>e</sup> grete  
losse of vertue in these two partes & abhomy nacyon of  
synne putteth me in gret fere of the thyrd parte y<sup>e</sup> whiche  
is to come. And yf my lyfe myght be prolonged mas  
ny peres only in vertuous vles / yet it myght not recom  
pence for the manyfolde offences whiche I haue done  
in the present syghte of my lord god and terryble Iuge  
of my lyfe whiche hateth no thyng but only synne. As  
las than my soule may be ful of sorowe whiche hath pro  
uoked my lord god / my moost tender loue to be wroth  
with me and to hate me more than I do a dog or a styns  
kyng carayne / for no thyng is so vyle so lothsome so  
stynkyng nor so abhomy nable in the syght or smellyns  
ge of man / as synne in the syght or smellynge of god. As  
las alas that I sholde offende my lord god whiche hath  
made me of nought & where he myght haue made me  
a stone or an vnreasonable best / he hath made me to y<sup>e</sup>  
ymage of hymselfe a reasonable creature / and whan I  
was loste redemed me with y<sup>e</sup> precyous blood of his her  
se and suffered the moost bytterst deth for me / and in all  
my lyfe he hath shewed grete kyndenesse vnto me / and  
I haue shewed grete unkyndenesse agayn to hym / he los  
ued me & I not hym / for I wyll not do after the wyll of  
hym / but I sette my wyl afoze his wyll / and y<sup>e</sup> pleasure



of my selfe afore the pleasure of hym / and in fulfyllynge  
my wyl I care not to dysplease hym. And thus I se not  
by hym whiche hath made so moche of me he hath made  
heuen and erthe for me / and hath comen to this erth to  
teche me þ way of saluacyon / and ha: horderned for me  
yt I wolde loue hym the inestimable Joye of his deuy  
nyte and to receyue the eternall kyngedome of felycete  
¶ All these thynges I forgete / & I ordre my selfe by my  
lewde neglygence and vnhappy lyuynge to lese the loue  
of my lord god / & þ transcendynge Joye of his kynges  
dome. I ordre me by my wretched lyfe to euerlastynge  
payne / woe maye I be a vessel of deth of Ire and Ins  
dynynacyon of god / he hath made my soule by the sacra  
ment of baptyme a vessel of mercy and grace / and I ha  
ue defouled it with abhomyable synne / & made it with  
out his Inmesurable mercy vessel of dampnacyon to  
be bynte in the fyre of hell amonge the horryble fendes  
euer without endynge. ¶ Alas what shall I do what  
shall I saye whiche haue erred thus ferre out of þ way  
of vertue and is casted depe in to the pytte of synne. A  
grete cause I haue of lamentacyon whiche am in this  
grete Jeoperdy of endlesse dampnacyon. I am a was  
ter and a dystroyer of my soule and body. I destroye the  
goodes of nature / of grace / and of the worlde as a man þ  
is worse than good in the syght of hym the whiche hath  
gyuen them to me to the entent that I sholde vse them  
vertuously. And in þ syghte of hym whiche shall moost  
bitterly punyshe hym. I vse them byepously I am clo  
sed in þ derke cloudes of Ignoraunce / and reprobable  
neglygence of my lord god / of my selfe and of vertuose  
lyuynge. All my lyfe is synfull / & as a drye tre barayne  
and ferre from all fruyte of vertue I thynke not on the

dyedfull Iugement of god/where I shall stande afore  
the terryble Iugement of cryst/and to rendre accomps  
te for all the dydes that I haue done in my soule and in  
my body. O there I shall shewe an vnfruytful lyfe/and  
yf there be any fruyte therein it is but fayned and false/  
or vnperfeyte or corrupted and other it is full lytell pleas  
sed or elles vriterly dyspleased god. And notwithstandinge  
ge that euery man there shall be fedde after this lyfe w  
suche fruyte as that he hath brought forth in this lyfe/  
than my fedynge is lyke to be full bytter vnto me. ¶ O  
how sorowful I ought than to be/for except y I sorowe  
for my synne in this lyfe. I am lyke for to be brought to  
grete sorowe after this lyfe. ¶ O my synful soule. O my  
myserable soule loke vpon thy selfe/see how thou arte  
brought in to the grete derkenesse of synne so depe that  
thou canste not see thy selfe. Seest thou not how y renz  
nest in to bayne thoughtes & vnlefull despyres. ¶ Remē  
bre that al the tyme y thou lokest not vpon vertue is lost  
and thou shalt be shent therfore/as moche tyme y ledest  
than whiche myght tourne the to grete Joye in tyme co  
mynge/and now all shall tourne the to grete punyshe  
ment except thou lerne to amende and to spende the res  
sydue of thy tyme. O howe aferde thou shouldest be to ha  
ue an vnfruytful lyfe/for the vnfruytful lyfe is a damp  
nable lyfe as almyghty god whiche is very trouth sayth  
Euery tree whiche bygeth not forth good fruyte it shall  
be cutte downe & caste in to y fyre. ¶ A mercy god what  
shal I do than for I am so barayne so drye frome all des  
uocyon and moysture of contrycyon and grace that I  
am deapte and redye to the fyre. ¶ A mercyfull lorde  
cutte me not downe by beth to suche tyme that my tree  
maye haue moysture thzugh thy grace & brynge forth



some profitable fruytes of penaunce/all my bydes that  
I do arte not suffycient to recompence for þe mete and  
drynke þe I receyue of þe to my bodely sustenaunce. ¶  
Where with shal I thā recompence for my soule/my bo-  
dy/my wytte/my herynge/my seynge/my speche/my  
helth/my bodely power/my lyfe/and where w all shal  
I recompence for my synne/ & for þe losse of grace whiche  
passeth these all/ for none shall be brought to dampnacy-  
on but suche as for lacke of grace are defouled w synne  
who so spendeth more in fedyng of a beest thā it is wor-  
the in itselfe is not that superfluous expence and vn-  
proufyttable. And yet merciful lord þe nouryssheth day-  
ly and haboundantly an unproufyttable worme & syn-  
kyng synner. ¶ A good lord thou woldest not that this  
wretche shal peryshe of whome thou doost so large ex-  
pences and so tenderly kepest it. Many good thou gy-  
uest it vnasked/ & frome many euyl thynges he preser-  
ued it vnthanked of it/ thou kepest me/ þe ledest me / and  
protectest me frome many perylles/ and as an vnkynde  
wretche I remembre not this & I do not calle in welth  
to the but in grete sorowe & fere whan than that I am  
lyke to falle. ¶ A good lord a more or a greter wretche  
is there none in this worlde than I am/ and a moost vn-  
kynde katyf/ a wretche/ a worme/ a vessell full of vnclen-  
nesse and abhomynacyon not worthy for to be called a  
man or a reasonable creature For I abuse that reason/  
that memozye / and that fredome of wyll whiche thou  
hast gyuen vnto me with all the gyftes & all the benes-  
fetes of nature and of fortune/ and so I am wors than a  
beest the whiche hath not the helpes and haue no reason  
for to directe theyr lyfe to the honoure and the wors-  
shyppe of god as I haue/ they haue no fredome of wyll

Compl. of þe soule.

A.iii.

for to chole the good & to leue þ euyl as I haue. My reason is gyuen to me for to knowe my lord god / & for to knowe how I sholde lyue to the pleasure of hym and to thynke vpon þ lyfe that is to come / & holyly for to orde my selfe therto / and for to auoyde the grete tourmentes and the endlesse trybulacyon the whiche after this lyfe is ordeyned for synne. ¶ A god mercy what grete darkenesse am I in / and my soule is i maner made blynde þ goostely syghte is gone. I loke not vp to my lord god with the syght of my soule / but all my thought / all my remoyre / all my loue / and all the grete pleasure in my soule is downewarde / & all is to vanytees of this erthe I am erthly i my prayers / in me studye / in my labours in my medytacyons / and in all my conuersacyō. I may well thynke that these wordes are berefyed of me. The prophete ysaie sayth. Erthe erthe erthe here þ worde of god / for I am made of erthe / and hastely I shall tourne to erthe / and al my conuersacyon is but erthe. I am reputed good lord in the syght of the after my loue / yf I loue erthe I am erthe / yf I loue erthly thynges I am erthly / yf I loue goostly thynges I am goostly / and yf I loue the good lord whiche arte very god than I am godly. ¶ A good lord I fere than that I am i thy reputacyon but as byle erthe. For in the erthe and in the erthly thynges is cuer my mynde . I kepe it not vpon the good lord / ne vpon þ holy orderynge of my soule I haue suffred my selfe by wretched custome so longe and so contynually for to renne frome the and frome actuall thoughtes of my soule and thynges whiche are prouffys table for to promote my soule in vertue and in good werkes . Than nowe I can not without grete payne and without grete labour for to fyxe my mynde ony tyme



oz space vpon the oz vpon the holy dyreccon and ozdes  
tynge of my soule/and I of a frowarde and of an obdus  
rate wyll in wretchednes enforces not neyther care not  
myselfe for to take parte agaynst this myserable Incly  
nacyon of myselfe/ and so it goeth al downewarde with  
me. I come not bpwarde to the neyther I wyll not grei  
tely applye myselfe for to come to the by actuall medyta  
cyon and by patyete loue of the. I slepe. I dreine and p  
I shall fynde whan the sharpe paynes of dethe shall cor  
me for to open the eye of my soule/for than I shall cleres  
ly se how baynely and how synfully and how wretched  
ly and how vnhappy and how myserably and how vn  
gracyously that I haue mysended the tyme of this ly  
fe/ p whiche tyme is gyuen vnto me onely bycause that  
I sholde spende it scrupfully in good and in vertuouse  
lyuynge vnto the grete honour and to the grete worshyp  
of our sauour Cryst Ihesu and vnto the promocyō of  
my soule in the glorie of eternall lyfe and of the heuen  
ly felicyte/and also for to auorde eternall dampnacyon  
whiche is ordeyned by p rygthwysnesse of almyghty god  
to the Inordynate lyuers of this lyfe/the whiche confus  
me the goodes that they haue receyued of god to theyr  
eternall reproboure/ sorowe and/ payne: & for to receyue of  
almyghty god fynally perpetuall dampnacyon.

**A**det animam meam vite mee. I am wery of  
my lyfe. It is so full of Ignoraunce and of nec  
lygence/so ful of vnhappy desyres and of synful wordes  
so full of forgetfulnesse and so full of euyl thoughtes/ &  
so full of vnfructful dydes and werkes and so full of vn  
prouffyttable heuynesse/and so ful vnlawful saddenelle  
and so full of bayne Joyes and synfull dylectacyons  
A.iiii.

With foule wretched and myserable pleasures / also it is  
full of paynes with vnpacience of proude desyres and  
with a ful couetous mynde / & with al these myseryes I  
see how y myself is but a course & a rennyng to dethe /  
and now I am more nerer it than whan as I laste spa  
ke of it. The deth cometh shortly / & y lyfe gooth awaye  
full fastely and full swyftely / & at y houre of deth I am  
lyke to be called for to rendre accomptes of my lyfe / and  
I am vnprouyded and vnware for to cōtente the Iuge  
of my lyfe / and than I shall be moost full of sorowe and  
payne & lamente or complayne the tyme y euer I came  
in to this lyfe / whiche so ueclygētly hath loste the profy  
te of this. A good lord I am ashamed & abashed of my  
lyfe in y syghte of the good lord whiche all thyng seeth  
clerly / & nothyng maye be hydde frome the. ¶ Sythen  
it is so that shame is feere of rebuke and reprove / and  
there is no rebuke whiche that I drede so moche as I  
do the rebuke of the good lord / wherfore I am moost  
ashamed of my synful lyfe in the syghte of the / and thus  
I am ashamed to lyue / and yet I am aserde to dye. For  
yf I may auoyde by the grete mercy of god the tormen  
tes of eternall dampnacyon / yet I feere y I shall bere w  
me in to purgatory the gylte of many synnes / & I shall  
paye by grete payne / the duyte of many oblygacyons /  
graūt me good lord perfyte feere of y. For whan I shall  
not feere by deth to come to the / for thy feere maketh sou  
les to declpne and flee frome synne. ¶ A good lord yf  
I had thy feere perfytly I sholde be more a dredde ony  
thyng to thynke or to desyre synfully in the syght of  
the / than I am to do synne in the syght of man. The  
synfull mocpys of my mynde are so abhomyable in  
the beholdyng of the as the dyde of shamefull synne in



the syght of man than yf I fered þ I sholde be apunys-  
shed and ashamed to thynke ony thyng displeasyng  
to þ. I waunte these fere of the / and why / for I haue not  
perfyte fayth of the. I than I am vnfaythful / and with-  
out fayth no man maye please the / and thus all my lyfe  
is displeasyng vnto the. ¶ A good lord what shall I  
do for I want fayth of the / fere of the / loue of the / & dres-  
de of the / but I want not the drede of the worlde / loue  
of the worlde / and shame of the worlde. And thus the  
yniage of my soule is defaulted & made foule i thy syght  
and is deprieved thy grete vertues wherby it sholde be  
made fayre and acceptable to the what shall I do than  
but tourne me to the & aske mercy for that I haue spen-  
ned my lyfe so myserably. I than I maye calle my soule  
a synfull soule whiche is without drede of the & wout  
shame of synne vnderstandyng that after the ordre of  
thy ryghtwysnesse synne muste haue sorowe / than my  
soule ought to haue sorowe / and al my lyfe sholde he we-  
pyng / & who shal gyue teres ynough to myn eyen that  
I maye wepe ynough for my myserable lpyng / and  
lamente that I euer haue spent so myserably my tyme  
whiche I can not now reuoke agayen / ne fruytfully reco-  
pence but by sorowe for my synne. ¶ Mas I haue loste  
the well of lyfe and of al true solace / and I haue delued  
in the olde stynkyng cysterne of synne / and the decepua-  
ble water ther of whiche semeth in þ begynnyng swete  
and delectable / & now it is tourned in to bytternesse / ab-  
homynacyon / and grete sorowe. ¶ O moost mercyfull  
lord whiche arte the wel of ppte & of grace frome whos-  
me the flode of celestyall glorie doth streame vpon all  
the heuely courte. Replenysshyng them with all pleas-  
sure & delectacyons passyng þ possybyltye of mannes

thynkynge / gyue me good lord in this vale of myferye  
for the glorye of thy name the fpyryte of compunccon  
that I may bytterly wepe for my synnes and to be pres  
erue by thy grace neuer frome hens for ward dāp  
nably to offend the. ¶ O merueylous god how mysera  
ble is my soule / whiche only can not sorowe accordyn  
ge to the greuous offences that it hath done in this ly  
fe but also it is in maner benomen and deed / for it feleth  
not the grete goostly sorowes that it hath / wherby excep  
te it haue helpe by meane of penaunce it shal be brough  
te to the bytter paynes of euerlastynge deth. ¶ I may  
curse synne the whiche hath brought me so ferre frome  
the good lord / and so ferre fro my selfe that I haue losse  
my felŷge & quyckenesse of my fpyryte / and the goostly  
taste of all fpyrual pleafure and delectacyons in ver  
tue. ¶ A myferable soule a synfull soule why arte thou  
so dulle & so flowe to all good werkcs whiche art to the  
pleafure of god / and to thy perpetuall promocyon and  
endlesse Joye / perpetual blyffe and hertely gladnesse /  
why arte thou so prompte and so redy to all wretched  
nesse and al werkcs of abhomyable synnes whiche are  
to y grete dyspleafure of almyghty god / and to thy gre  
te payne and sorowe and dampnacyon bothe of soule &  
of body . Why arte thou so obfcurous and forgetfull of  
fruytfull & vertuous doctryne / and so retentyle of euyl  
fpekynge and wordes Incytnge to synne. Woo woo  
mayst thou be whiche leuest the waye of vertue & cho  
sest the waye of byces / leuest the waye of saluacyō and  
takest the waye of dampnacyon . Thou haste lyfe and  
deth bothe layde before the / and whiche thou wylt thou  
mayst chose. Louest thou not lyfe / hatest thou not deth  
lovest thou not delectacyō and pleafure / hatest not thou



payne and sorowe. Alas how unhappy arte þ than whiche cholest the waye of synne / the waye of deth / þ waye of payne & endlesse sorowe / and wylfully leuest þ waye of vertue whiche ledeth to lyfe Joye and endlesse myrth with al þ herte can thynke or desyre consolacyon. Thou rennes to bodely deth & not only bodely wherby thy soule shall be departed frome thy body / but also the goostly syght of deth where þ shalt be for euer departed frome the face and clere bylyon of god whiche is þ lyfe to thy soule lyke as thy soule is lyfe to thy body / the paynes of fyre and the terryble syght of the deuylles shall not be so greuous vnto the / as the sondrynge frome thy lord god whiche full sure þ thou shalt se hym in his glozpe. Wold not thou saye that suche a man were worthy sorowe and payne whiche wolde chose to go that way were it neuer so pleasaut there he knewe certaynly / yf he contynued therein that he shal be taken with theues robbed and put to the moost bytterest payne of deth. Then I counseyll the by tymes leue the waye of synne / for the ende therof is endlesse sorowe / and the pleasure þ cometh therof be it neuer so grete it shall hastily passe. And yf thou come to that ende thou shalt take thy leue also true as god is true frome all pleasures without ende. Our lord of his grete mercy offred to the eternall pleasure for a shorte temporall payne suffred accordynge to the ordenaunce of his wyl / yf þ wylt refuse so grete a lucte for so lytel a payment than thou arte an unhappy marchaunt. Then yf thou wylt not folowe the wyl of god in sufferynge of this payne / but wyl fulfyll thyn owne wyl in takynge thy shorte & synfull pleasures of this lyfe / arte not thou than worthy / by þ ryghtwysenes of god to lose and be depriued of this perpetuall Joye & pleasure þ canst not resos

nably saye nay. For thou that wylt refuse so incalculable a Joye for so lytell a pryce / than þ settest lytell thereby / & in that thou dyslablest thy self to haue it. ¶ And of very equyte thou whiche wylfully and þfully forsakest eternal saluacyon / thou deseruest by the ryghtwysnesse of god to haue eternall payne and dampnacyon. ¶ Then beholde vpon the ryght syde the mercy of god whiche is redy to gyue the perpetuall Joye for a shorte vertuous payne. And beholde vpon the lyfte hande the ryghtwysnesse of god whiche shall gyue the eternall payne for refusynge of eternal Joye whiche thou forsokest for a shorte þful pleasur / thā beware what þ doost / he of his grete grace offereth the perpetuall Joye. And yf thou wylt so lyghtly refuse it / than he thyrreth the with endelesse sorowe and payne that thou mayste not escape his handes / chose þ now whether thou wylt for a lytel payne haue endelesse pleasure / or for a lytel symple solace haue endelesse paye and sorowe / and one thou muste nedes chose. ¶ I counseyll the to take payne and leue pleasure / drawe the to the ryght hande that thou be not founde at the daye of dome amonge the damned people vpon the lyfte hande / leue vayne and synfull temporall Joye for the ende therof is sorowe / yf þ lyuest after thy plesaunt desyres of thy flesshe it shall brynge the to endelesse and paynfull dethe / yf thy flesshe lyue after thy soule / and thy soule after god / than thou shalt lyue eternally. ¶ I may seke vnstable soule / dulle soule / myserable & synfull soule / þ wold haue helth / strength / loue / & power : thou wold be moche made of / & haue rychesse / freedom & fredom / þ wold be wout fere wout heynesse / þ wold be wyfte / lyght / ympossyble / why sekest þ the goddes in the regyon of dethe they are not here they are only there



where is very lyfe / and no lyfe may be called very lyfe  
but only that lyfe whiche is eternall lyfe / for there deth  
hath no power any thyng to mynysshe thy lyfe or any  
thyng p apperteyneth to þ lyfe / for frome þ lyfe deth  
is perpetuelly exyled whiche maketh this lyfe no lyfe /  
and all thyng to banyshe awaye whiche perteyneth to  
this lyfe. ¶ A my soule loue that lyfe & that lord aboue  
all thyng whiche shall gyue the þ Joyful lyf that blest  
lyfe perdurable and eternal lyuynge what hast thou  
in this mortal lyf but labour weynesse sorow and pay  
ne / with these thou begynnest lyfe / w these þ cōtynuest  
thy lyfe / with these thou shalt ende thy lyfe / þ pleasures  
are shortly passynge / the sorowes and paynes are longe  
abydynge / and all erthly Joyes are medled with mys  
serye of synne / thou thynkest synne is but lytell / wolde  
god thou woldest call it to mynde how greuous it is in  
the syght of the grete Judge of the worlde a myghty god  
remembze how greuously he hath punysshed synne / gre  
te parte of the aungelles he caste out of heuen for synne  
whiche are of all creatures moost excellent in naturall  
perfeccon. ¶ O how shalt thou thynke thā that he shal  
spare the whiche arte synfull / for thou arte no thyng so  
precious i nature as the leest aungell whiche was loste  
and dampned for synne / & thy body is but a dounghylle  
and a sacke of stynkynge myste / than truste þ that yf þ  
wylt not leue synne thou shalt perysshe with them / for  
the ryght wysnesse of god wyl punyshe synne / & ryght  
they shall perysshe frome þ perpetual pleasure & glorie  
of god whiche wyl not leue synne / all we are exyled fro  
me paradyse for synne / all the worlde was drowned ex  
cepte. viii. persones in þ tyme of Noes floode for synne  
the tye cytees of whiche one was Sodome & Gomorre

were destroyed with fyre and byrystone & sank downe  
for synne / the Egypcyans were drowned in the reede see  
for synne / & chyldren of Israel were kyled a grete nom-  
bre in deserte for synne / & now all the .xii. trybus are in  
captuyte for synne / translacyns of kyngdomes & Em-  
pyres fro man to man is for synne / batayles / pestylen-  
ce / and hungre in comyn plages of god contynually in  
some parte of the worlde or vpon the people is for synne  
and fynally all desyre of synne shall cease frome all pleas-  
sure and tourne to vntremedyable paynes and synners  
shall be put with synners in euerlastynge woo there as  
they shal neuer tourne to Joy or pleasure agayne. ¶ A  
wretched soule why forowest not thou for synne / seest  
thou not how my lord loued the and hated synne whiche  
wolde suffre the moost paynfull deeth to deliuer the  
frome synne / letne to loue thy louer but þu hatest thy lo-  
uer / for whā thou doest synne thou doest playnely that  
is i to make hym to suffre deeth agayne thou louest synne  
whiche is the moost gretest enemy for it shal byrnye the  
except thou leue it to endlesse & horryble payne thou set-  
test lytell by synne a wolde god our lord myght set so ly-  
tell ther by / for than þu sholde be deliuered frome grete  
fereheuytnesse & payne whiche þu haste deserued for synne  
but wo sholde I be good lord for euery transgressyō of  
thy cōmaundement for yf there come none other therof  
dysobedynce it dyshonoured the / a how sholde I saye  
that synne is lytell for I can not truely saye þu the dysho-  
nour of þu is lytell / a how I boude to honour þu þu desyrest  
it not for al þu þu haste done to me but þu I shold honour do  
to þu. I receyue thy benefytes & þu mayst no thyng recey-  
ue of me but honour / þu gyuest my gooynesse & this may  
growe. I may gyue to þu no goodes wherby þu mayste



be the better for my goodnesse may not growe. I maye  
gyue to þe honour & this may not growe in þe but in me/  
& whan thyn honour groweth in me than thy goodnesse  
in me / & al the prouffytes of my dydes in to me and none  
to þe / for I may by dydes no thyng make þe to better / but  
I may make me þe better by thy grace i þe I do honour  
to þe. A dere lord how wo sholde I than be to dishonour  
the / & I may do no more dyshonour to þe thā to do synne  
whiche can not be done in mynde in wyll ne dyde but in  
the clere syght of the / a how wo sholde I than be to do  
synne & ther by for to dyshonoure þe whiche arte my lord  
and my god / my maker & my redeemer & preseruer / and  
fynally wolde by þe me to se thy glorie & to haue w the  
honour in eternyte. A how shall I saye þe synne is lytell  
synne þe synne dyshonoured þe / & no thyng sholde be mo-  
re shamyfull & sorowfull in me than for to do ony dyde to  
dyshonoure the. Alas how may I fynde in my herte to  
to dyshonoure þe whiche haue none helpe but only of the  
**O** wretched & myserable soule why remembrest thou  
not þe trouthe of god / for thou knowest it wel þe it is Im-  
possible þe he sholde make ony lye / & thou knoweste well  
that he promysed no thyng but that it shal be fulfilled  
for the power is so grete that no thyng may lette hym /  
than thou knowest veryly that thou shalte appere as  
fore hym and acompte all thy lyfe / and of all that thou  
haste receyued of hym / what sayest thou arte thou redy  
to thy rekenyng / canste thou shewe that thou hast wel  
expended and well vled all the goodes that thou haste  
receyued of god / haste not thou baynly losse and baynly  
ly suffred for to be losse many of these gyftes of our lord  
god / and many thou haste expended that thou haste

to reasō for to laye cōforte the at thyn acompte but that  
thou arte worthy to be dampned for them. ¶ **A**las sythe  
thou canste not gyue a good rekenyng of thy tyme ex  
pended/why wilt not þ amende the/ & by the wyl spens  
dyng of thy lyfe to come for to procure the fauoure of  
this ryghtwylle Iuge/ he is redy of his ryght grete mer  
cy to take one daye well spended for a yere. ¶ **O** than sy  
then he is thus kynde to the & thou wilt contynue in vn  
kynde vnto hym/ this synne of vnkynndenesse & ingrati  
tude/ yf þ hast none other synne it is ynough to procure  
the Ire or wrath of this Iuge/ why wilt thou than vnk  
kynde soule dayly multiply newe offenses why rememb  
breth not þ þ grete Jeopardy þ thou standest in for thyne  
olde synne. ¶ **O** wretche lerne to wepe applye & to take  
wylful sorowe/ þ moche cause hast þ to wepe and to sor  
we/ for yf þ myght wepe as moche water as is in the see  
yet it were of thy selfe suffycyēte to washe thy soule fro  
me synne þ doost, as a malefactor whiche hath offens  
ded his pryncce & is sorry for to be taken & to suffre grete  
payne/ & yet wylfully he wyll more outrageously offens  
de hym knowyng well that he shall suffre therfore the  
more payne/ þ sayst to me that this pryncce is mercyfull.  
¶ **I** laye to the that he is mercyful to none but to suche as  
haue mercy vpon them selfe & wyll leue theyr wretched  
lyuyng/ than haue mercy vpon thy selfe and leue þ mys  
serye of synne/ for thou shalt be called soner than thou  
trustest to thy acompte of all thy werkes of all thy ydels  
nes of all thy wordes/ of all thy sylence/ of all thy sleppyn  
ge/ of all thy wakyng/ of all thy sekenesse/ of al thy hel  
the/ of all thy rycheesse/ of all thy pouerte/ of all thy fedyn  
ge/ of all abstynences/ and of all thyng that thou hast  
done and leste vndone to the leest thought of thy soule/



and of al thyngge perterpnyngge to thy powet whiche thou  
 haste not ordeyned to the wyll of god & saluacyon of thy  
 soule / and thy body shall be punysshed with þ for it syn-  
 ned with the and thou in it for the cause of synne is in it  
 and it shall haue no payne but for the / for it myght not  
 synne but by the. Alas why wilt not thou see whether  
 thou goest & beholde þ ende of thy passage that thou des-  
 mest that thou goest to pleasures / & as a blyndfull man  
 thou goest euen contrarpe towarde payne / thou thyn-  
 kest thou goest for to haue thy wyll / and thou goest there  
 thou shalt haue all thyngge contrarpe to thy wyll / and þ  
 desyrest myrth and thou takest þ waye of endles labours  
 & perpetuall payne & euerlastyngge dampnacyon.

**A**d et aiaz mea. n bite mee. ¶ A my soule hath a  
 grete cause to be wery of my lyfe / for I lyue not  
 as þ louer of god sholde lyue / but as a wretched catpfe  
 whiche forgeteth god / & deserued to be forgoten of hym.  
 ¶ I haue no mynde vpon my saluacyon / my mynde is  
 rather vpon thyngge of dampnacyon. I endure me not  
 to forin me. I laboure not to repressse the wretched mo-  
 cyon whiche I fele in me. I suffre my mynde at large  
 to renne in vanytees / as a creature that hath no god or  
 Iuge ne thyngge to answere for / ne thyngge to sorowe for  
 ne to fere / for helpe is offred to me and I wyll not aske  
 it / it is offred to me and I wyll not put my hande there  
 to myn enemyes & myn accusers I consente to / & to my  
 lord & my louer I wyll not consent. A good lord what  
 shall I do at þ dredefull day of deth at þ terryble dome  
 in the day of Iugement. ¶ A how many thousande syn-  
 nes shall come thā vpo me wout ony prouysyon as they  
 laye in watche to take me whiche I see not now / & I to  
 Compl. of þ soule. B.i.

he no hope to deliuer my selfe by playne confellyon and  
many a thyng whiche I truste now is no synne shall tha  
appete greuous synne / and many a deed whiche I trust  
now is good / than I shall synde them euyl & blacke and  
abhomynable they shal appete to me / there I shal res  
ceyue in soule & body moche woo as I haue done in sou  
le and body moche wretchednesse / & than shall I be wo  
for I shal receyue so woful and sorowfull endlesse payne  
whan the tyme shall be passed except I leue now synne  
and tozue me to god and deserue by vertuous lyuynge  
to haue mercy / there shal be payne vnprofytable and vn  
fruytfull penaunce / for that payne shall not remeue the  
synne of them whiche in this lyfe wolde not take woful  
payne to be deliuered frome synne and able to be damp  
ned from grace that they shall haue no power to recom  
pence and to satysfye for theyr offences / for whan grace  
was offred to them they refused it / and whan the tyme  
of penaunce was layed afore them / vnfruytfully & neclis  
gently they passed it. ¶ O good lord now I ought for  
to remembre what I haue done and what that I haue  
deserued to receyue for my doyng / all my yerres I shold  
recorde in the bytternesse of my soule / & saye how my tyme  
is consumed without profyte / & what woo I haue  
wrought to my selfe / yf I coude remembre that I had  
done many good thynges than I sholde be gladd / but  
I remembre yf I haue done many wretched & euyl thyn  
ges and fewe good / & therfore I haue grete cause to be  
woo / & yf I will not applye me to be wo where I shall  
be wo there I shal neuer departe thersfro. ¶ A wo wo  
be to this grete hardenelle of myn hert / for these grete  
hamers of remembraunce of eternall tormentes & moost  
sorowfull byces are to lyght to breke it. ¶ O dulnesse



insanable and vnable to be heled all this sharpe baydes  
are not suffycient to quycken þ / they are all to blunt for  
the. ¶ Alas sythen the grete paynes þ god hath ordeyned  
ned for synne are to lytel to put the in fere / and make the  
to be dyligent for thy saluacyon. ¶ A god mercy / a dedly  
ly dulnesse þ is in me sythen the terryble thondre of my  
synes & ghosly syght of þ grete abhomynable multytude  
of paynes causeth no quyknes of deuocyo / no mys-  
serye of teres / no fere of god in me. ¶ A wo may I be  
whiche fele myselfe in this grete myserye / not redy to  
arise but rather desyred to fall deper. I am worse than  
a stone / for it is descended of nature for to descende / but  
I descende by malice agaynst nature. ¶ A dete lord I  
loue more erthly vanyte than I do þ or the place of thy  
gloze / my soule is croked al downe to þ erthe / for there  
þ loue is of the ther it is tyred and not vpon þ / and there-  
fore it lokid not vp to þ / here is mater of myserye in me  
to expte an hondreth soules to sorowe & make them con-  
tynue vneasely in wepyng but my soule is so dyped fro  
al moysture & grace þ there cometh no teres frome me and  
thus I make se myselfe a dype stocke / a seer tree redy to  
fyr. A merucylous god how am I comen to this dyl-  
nesse to this dypenesse / to this blyndnesse & derkenesse of  
my soule / my soule is made bynome & Impotent to all  
perfyte dedes of vertue / & not only it wanted wyll / but  
in maner it wanteth power to do well / & what hath made  
me this feblenesse but only synne & what hath made  
in me suche synne but only a croked and frowarde wyll.  
A wretched dysposycyo of my soule of the whiche I am  
cause myselfe / & therfore myn Impotensy / & Indisposy-  
cyon to holy & perfyte luyng is none excule to me / for  
this myselfe hath made me by longe custome in luyng

B.ii.

**A** good lord an unkynde soule am I to the. I can not  
dyspmyle to the / for no thyng I may withdraue from  
the spght of the / of a chyld thou hast gyuen me power  
to lyue vertuously and to please the not for thyn auayle  
but for myn auayle for the endlesse promocyon & Joyes  
full reward to be receyued of the / & haste called me / and  
yet & contynuest it by good thoughtes / by good counsey  
le / by holy prechynge / by vertuous examples / by gre  
te gyftes / callynge to me for to come to the . And I as a  
wretche repell the & all the gyftes & thou gyuest me I  
abuse to the dyspleasure of & and to the grete accusacyō  
and without thy mercy to the grete dampnacyō of me  
I desyre sodayne sorowes and paynes to come vpo me  
there thou haste gyuen to me this respyte & tyme of gre  
te delyberacyon to auoyde the paynful dounge of helle  
and to come to the Joyfull Emppre of thy glozpe there  
euerlastyngely for to dwell with the I attende it not  
wherfore I deserue hastely for to be caste downe by &  
paynfull blastes of the grete horryble tempestes of deth.  
I knowe wel & I may not here alwaye abyde / & yet my  
mynde / and my loue is moze here than there & I muste  
alwaye abyde. **A** merueylous god a grete blyndnesse  
is in me that I sholde desyre for to abyde in & same plas  
ce of myserye there as I wel knowe & I may not abyde  
than for to be in the place of blysse and of myzth and gre  
te felycyte there as I may come yf I wyl and for euer  
abyde / god hath made me a reasonable creature for to  
chose & beste lyfe / and I make my selfe an vnreasonable  
creature for to chose the worst lyfe / & I loue & I sholde  
not loue / and I hate that I sholde loue / and thus both  
my mynde & my wyl I abuse vnto my grete hurte whis  
che thou haste gyuen me to myn helpe / yf I shold come



playne vpon my selfe all that I can reduce to my mynde  
of myne owne wretchednesse & unkyndnesse to god/  
remembryng the grete benefytes & gyftes y I haue re-  
ceyued of hym/ and how gentyll a lord he hath ben to  
me without my deseruyng certaynly all the wretched-  
nesse & dyscomendacyon & that I can saye of my selfe is  
to lytell in regarde of y grete dyscomendacyon and bla-  
me whiche I haue deserued/ my wretched dysposycyō  
is more redy to do euill than my memoire & many moo-  
yf they were knytte togyder with me are able to recey-  
ue. I fele my selfe full of wretchednesse. I am prone and  
all redy to all euill/ elles dulle & slowe to all goodnesse I  
sythen I myght here or see my defautes shewed afore  
me lyke as thy be I shold abhorre with my selfe lyke as  
with a toode or a serpent. I what drede sholde my herte  
vnbryce of that terryble Iugement whiche must be gy-  
uen of my selfe at the houre of deth where y moost ryght  
wyse Iuge hymselfe shall accuse me/ & myn owne con-  
science shal wytnesse agaynst me how I haue mysused  
my soule and lytel heded the valoure therof whiche was  
bought with the precyouse blood of cryste very god and  
man creatour and maker of the vniuersal worlde lord  
of heuen and erthe to whose name all creatures shal do  
obedience. I shal gyue accomptes how I haue abused  
my mynde my wyll my body all my fyue wyttes my ton-  
ge my beaute my helth my strength connyng vtrue/  
how I haue mysordred my selfe my soule and body the  
euill mocrons both of soule and body how I haue not  
done y was in me to repressse them but rather to kepe/  
them & to werke them. All these good lord I forgete &  
of all these I shal gyue a strayne accomptes. Also of mes-  
te & drynke golde syluer & clothes/ & of all these whiche

had ben vnder my tynction / as chyldren seruauntes / &  
 of the euyll dedes that I haue done / and of all the good  
 dedes whiche I myght haue done / & for slouth & sloge  
 gysshenes of myselte I haue lefte them vndone of al the  
 tyme þ I haue receyued sythē I had ble of reaso. ¶ A  
 dere lord what shal I do at þ dredful houre of rekenyn  
 ge where as shal be shewed ryght wysnesse wout grace  
 yf I now laboure not for grace. ¶ O what shal I do  
 dye tree that I am and byynge forth no good fruyte in  
 þ chirche of god / but rather sewed fruyte by many euyll  
 wordes euyll werkes and euyll examples. I am an vns  
 proufytable tree apte & worthy to be caste in to endeles  
 se fyre. ¶ A what shal I do that daye whan I shal gy  
 ue acompte of all þ tyme gyuen to me of our lord & how  
 I haue spende it to þ honoure of hym. I may saye no  
 :thge is myn owne for I must gyue a straye rekenyn  
 ge of all that I haue. I am but as a bayly & a mynystre  
 vnder god and taken charge well to spende his goodes  
 dere lord & gyue me grace amōge al temporal myrth of  
 te to remembre the bytternesse of the dredful accompte  
 that I may that day receyue þ kyngedome of endelesse  
 Joye and mercy.

¶ Edet animam meam vite mee. ¶ A dere lord  
 Aseyne the myspendynge of my lyfe I am werry  
 of my lyfe. I myselte am greuous to myselte my bur  
 then is grete & is lyght to my body / but it is heuy to my  
 soule / it is so grete þ it is lyke to presse me downe from  
 heuen vnto the pytte of hell excepte specyall grace and  
 helpe of my sauoure. ¶ O my mercyfull lord sende me  
 teeres þ may lament daye & nyght my myserable lyfe &  
 washe awaye þ fylth of so longe gaderynge of my soule  
 I am woo whan I remembre so longe as I haue ben



in this lyfe & so wretched / and my wretchednes dayly  
greueth me / my mynde is all occupped i vanytees and  
my wyll in frowardnesse / my mouth in shewyng my  
body in ydelnesse / & my werkes in wretchednes. Al who  
shal grue to myn eyen a welle of teeres y I may cōtyn-  
ually wepe & wayle my woful lyfe my negli- gent lyfe / my  
vnwysse & folysh lyfe. I lyue not as a reasonable crea-  
ture oughte to lyue refozmynge my soule & body and my  
werkes to my lord whiche hath ordeyned me in this ly-  
fe y by my werkes well orde- red to hym I shold come to  
his lyfe whiche lyfe onely ought to be called very lyfe /  
for that onely is lyfe whiche can not be ended by deth &  
not y lyfe where we dayly renne to deth / & y lyfe onely  
is helth whiche can not be brokē with sekenesse / & that  
onely is Joy whiche can not be Interrupted w sorowe  
and that only is perfyte blyss whiche can not be melde  
with myserye of payne or synne. ¶ O y blynde alle why  
openst y not thyn eyen for to see the dyffrence betwixte  
lyfe & deth / vertue / and vices / sekenesse & helth / felicitye  
myserye / labour thou wretch for to aryse whiche lyest  
ouercharged with olde synnes / putte feete to feete / we-  
pyng to wepyng / excepte y aplyest thyselfe wyllfully  
to sorowe / y ryght wysnesse of god shall magre thyn he-  
de byng the to sorowe. Acholse than the lesse sorowe to  
auoyde y more sorowe / the temporall sorowe to auoyde  
the eternall sorowe. Remembrest not thou y he shall Ius-  
ge the whome y hast made by manyfolde offences thyn  
aduersarye / to whome y hast done dysppte and rebuke  
bryngynge his cōmaundement afore his owne face. ¶ Al  
god mercy I ought to be sorpy in remēbyng his kynde-  
nesse to me and myne Ingratytude & vnkyn- denesse to  
hym / and the more kyndenesse he shewed to me y more

kynde I ought for to be to hym / and more I am bounde  
by þe lawe of kyndnesse for to please hym / & the more my  
synne is . yf I dysplease hym awo ought I than to be  
for lyke as kyndenesse is dayly more and more / for þe less  
get that he spared me the more kyndenesse he shewed  
vnto me / so by the circumstance of unkyndenesse / the  
more gracious is the synne in me . What shall I saye to  
this Iuge sythen þe onely myn owne kyndenesse is able  
to conuylte me whiche so oftentymes calleth me for to  
amende my lyfe Inwardely Inspyacyon / and many  
a thought þe whiche he putteth in my mynde contrarye  
vnto myn owne wretched dysposycyon . And outwarde  
he called me by prechyng / and by moche good counsey  
lyng / by redyng / by example gyfynge of such whiche  
hath lesse wytte than I / lesse power to good werkes than  
I / god hath gyuen to me more precyous gyftes & helpe  
to do well / and yet I do worse or not so well / am not I  
than worthy afoze that ryghtwyle Iuge to haue grete  
punysshement / he that is now moost pacyent to me yf I  
amende not my lyfe shall be moost felle / and angrye w  
me . ¶ And he whiche now is moost lyberall to me /  
than shall be moost harde to me / and he whiche now is  
moost meke to me than shall be moost fellest / now moost  
mercifull / than moost rygorous and strayte in Iuge  
ment / I may not flee this Iugement / alwaye I am  
and shall be vnder his hande . Now I am vnder the  
ryght hande of mercy / than shall I be vnder the heuy  
hãde of his ryghtwylness . Woos me woos is me whos  
me haue I offended / whome I haue not attended / whos  
me I haue prouoked to be wroth with me . ¶ Alas wret  
ched what haue I done . I haue dyshonoured my lord  
de god . I haue prouoked almyghty god to take vengeance



on me yf his hande of mercy had not reteyned þ swerde  
of vengeance I sholde haue perished longe afore this  
for many tymes I haue deserued dampnacyon / but vn  
to this tyme he hath deferred þ sentence / and euer aby  
deth whan I amende and come to reconsylacyon. ¶  
Wretched synner why remembre not I of this lyfe þ vn  
certayne is and for the tyme of this lyfe the grete kynde  
nesse in god and gratytude / & how after this lyfe none  
shall be taken to grace whiche wll not amende in this  
tyme and space. I beleue as I were immortall. I fere  
not what shall falle / and myn olde lyfe customes hath so  
tyed me þ without specyall helpe of my lord god I can  
not lose me. Helpe me good lord frome these dāgers of  
dygnacyon & wrath of these I am benomen / my power  
is nought without supportacyon & helpe of thy mercy.  
¶ What anguysshe shall be in me yf I do so unhappes  
ly gyde me to see þ terryble daye where he whiche hathe  
moost loued me / & moost done and moost suffred for me  
shall accuse me where he shall laye his woundes agaynst  
me / his crosse / his spere crowne of thornes shall testefye  
agaynst me / my good aūgell whiche hath so hollosomy at  
many tymes counseyllled me / & I haue repelled & lytell  
sette by his couseyll this he shall witnesse agaynst me / all  
deuylls whiche haue tempted me to synne there shall  
accuse me / and there reherse þ wordes of my professyon  
there shall he shewe openly all my synnes in what thyng  
ge þ I haue synned / in what place & tyme / & how I dyd  
synne / and what thyng: not only that I haue done euyl  
but what good werkes that I haue leste vndone whi  
che I ought to haue. All the creatures of god of whome  
I haue receyued ony benefyte or profyte shall accuse  
me / for thy haue serued me by cause I sholde serue god

and that I haue deceyued theym & done þ was in me to  
robbe theym of theyr labours / þ heuen þ erth / the sonne  
what mynde of man sholde not drede this terryble Ius  
gement / who sholde not drede þ presence of the eternall  
Iuge where all synnes shall be brought clerly in our sy  
ght & those thynges whiche we dyd w grete delectacy  
on shall be layde afore vs to our grete sorowe confusyon  
& detestacyō. The Iuge shall be aboue vs whole hādes  
we shall not escape / the helle vnder vs & the fendes redy  
to drawe vs thyder / þ Iuge angered woutforth / þ cons  
science bytyng & tourmentyng withinforth / & sythen  
the ryghtwyle man scarcely shall be saued / the wretched  
synner so vnbelapped with wretchednesse where shall  
become whom feere of dampnacyon & remorsse of con  
science shall shake & make hym to cry for woo. Al wo may  
I than be whiche haue so many maters in me to bysge  
me to þ woo / it shall be Impossyble þ dape to hyde me / &  
it shall be to terryble & ferefull that dape to shewe me / &  
nedesly I must appere / and by myselfe wout ony pro  
curatour and answer for all þ I haue done here / & not  
onely for myn owne dedes but for all perteynyge to my  
care & Iurysdyccyon where ony defaute hath ben there  
I ought to haue helpe. ¶ How shall I answer for  
many whiche am not able to answer for myselfe. O my  
charge is grete my remembraūce is lytell / my harmes  
do multiplye & I seke no helpe. I renne to deth all vn  
dysposed / my mynde is not with me. I am not with my  
selfe. I seke moze for your aduauntage than for myselfe  
my burden I shall onely bere for myselfe. Now myght  
I make it lyghter but I enlarge it & make it heuier my  
selfe / but now aryse þ synner & se how woo is thy sauy  
oure Cryst Ihesu / he is called þ lambe of god by whom



thou arte redeemed his merytes are sufficient though þ  
synnes be neuer so greuous call for helpe & thou shalt not  
be shent/ leue thy synnes & chaunge thynne entente & pur  
pose to do well/ chaunge false pleasures in to paynfull so  
lace & in to sorowe/ loke vp & dispeyre not for thou shalt  
haue helpe ynough/ truste on hþ whome þ dyedest/ leue  
thy synne & flee to hym þ shalt haue socoure in al thy nes  
des/ renne agayne to hym frome whome þ haste roien  
Crye bpō hþ inporunely whom þ haste offended moost  
greuously/ and of his grete mercy he may & wll of all  
other helpe þ moost redely/ & meke fleshyō excludeth dis  
peracyon for ther shall none be dāpned but only for syn  
nes not truly cōfessed. I mene of suche whiche as haue  
receyued þ baptysme of cryste. A Ihesu for thy holy nas  
me is as moche to say by Interpretacyon as þ sauour  
of synners/ by his medycacyon Ihesu þ holy name be bes  
refted of þ in sauþge of a grete synner/ whiche haue ben  
by presūptuous wll dysobedyent vnto Ihesu/ forgete  
my pryde & ordyne it not to deth/ but washe my soule  
frome synne w those stremes of the blood whiche ranne  
frome the fōutayne of þ ryght syde. Now behold swete  
Ihesu w thynne eyen of prte these synners whiche calleth  
that swete name that comfortable name of the /the nas  
me to synners of moost delectacyon/ the name of blyssed  
hope/ the name of saluacyon/ and conuersacyon. What  
is Ihesu but oure sauoure and redemptour/ wherfore  
Ihesus for thy bytter passyon be to me Ihesus/ þ haste  
made me nowe saue me/ thou haste redeemed me frome  
dampnacyn nowe delyuer me than of thy goodnesse and  
nowe suffre not me to peryshe for my wretchednes/ suf  
fre not wretchednes to lese i me þ thyn Infynyte good  
nesse þ þ hast gyue to me/ take to the good lord þ whiche

is thyng and remeue frome wretchednesse for þis myn:  
**¶** Now Ihesu / Ihesu haue mercy vpon me this tyme  
 of mercifulnesse that I may escape the terryble Iuges  
 ment in the tyme of ryghtwysnesse / take me good lord  
 in to thy large bosom of mercy it shall be not lesse good  
 lord / for the more thou receyuest þ more it is / than thy  
 mercy is large ynough what soeuer we do amysse & we  
 calle hertely this bolō is than redy. Admytte vs moost  
 louely Ihesu amonge the nombze of thy electe chyldze  
 that with them we maye euerlastyngly laude the / and  
 our profyte fruytyon and gloze in the amonge all those  
 whiche ioue thy name Ihesu to whome be honoure and  
 gloze by Infynyte duracō of eternyte . Amen.

¶ Here endeth a lamentable complaīnt that þ soule maketh  
 of þ wretched lyfe of the body. Enprynted at Lond  
 don in fletestrete at the sygne of the sonne / by Wynkyn  
 de Worde.





